

Community resources

[Follow us on Twitter](#) [Check our Reddit](#) [Twitter this](#) [Digg this page](#) [Contact us on IRC](#)

courage is contagious

Viewing cable 08BANGKOK3374, THAI WEBSITES, RADIO FACE LESE MAJESTE SCRUTINY

If you are new to these pages, please read an introduction on the [structure of a cable](#) as well as how to [discuss them](#) with others. See also the [FAQs](#)

Understanding cables

Every cable message consists of three parts:

- The top box shows each cables unique reference number, when and by whom it originally was sent, and what its initial classification was.
- The middle box contains the header information that is associated with the cable. It includes information about the receiver(s) as well as a general subject.
- The bottom box presents the body of the cable. The opening can contain a more specific subject, references to other cables ([browse by origin](#) to find them) or additional comment. This is followed by the main contents of the cable: a summary, a collection of specific topics and a comment section.

To understand the justification used for the classification of each cable, please use this [WikiSource](#) article as reference.

Discussing cables

If you find meaningful or important information in a cable, please link directly to its unique reference number. Linking to a specific paragraph in the body of a cable is also possible by copying the appropriate link (to be found at the paragraph symbol). Please mark messages for social networking services like Twitter with the hash tags **#cablegate** and a hash containing the reference ID e.g. **#08BANGKOK3374**.

Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
08BANGKOK3374	2008-11-14 08:27	2011-08-30 01:44	CONFIDENTIAL	Embassy Bangkok

Appears in these articles:

<http://www.bangkokpost.com/opinion/opinion/253088/wikileaks>

VZCZCXRO0868
PP RUEHCHI RUEHCN RUEHDT RUEHHM
DE RUEHBK #3374/01 3190827
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 140827Z NOV 08
FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5031
INFO RUEHHS/ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS PRIORITY
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING PRIORITY 6509
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA PRIORITY 9200
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 5361
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL PRIORITY 5055
RUEHWL/AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON PRIORITY 2509
RUEHCHI/AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI PRIORITY 5844
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BANGKOK 003374

SIPDIS

STATE FOR EAP, DRL, IO; NSC FOR PHU

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/04/2018

TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [KPAO](#) [KJUS](#) [TH](#)

SUBJECT: THAI WEBSITES, RADIO FACE LESE MAJESTE SCRUTINY

REF: A. BANGKOK 3350 (QUESTIONING THE UNQUESTIONABLE)
1B. BANGKOK 2344 (FURTHER LESE MAJESTE ACCUSATIONS)
1C. BANGKOK 1949 (LEADING UNIVERSITY)
1D. BANGKOK 1662 (LESE MAJESTE ACCUSATIONS)

BANGKOK 00003374 001.2 OF 002

Classified By: ADCM Robert Griffiths, reason 1.4 (b, d)

Summary and Comment

1. (C) The Information and Communications Technology (ICT) Ministry and the Ministry of Interior (MOI) joined recent Army and Police efforts against lese majeste in late October. The ICT Ministry sought the cooperation of website editors in self-censoring content and announced an effort to create an expensive gateway to filter anti-monarchy postings. The MOI directed provincial governors to monitor leaflets and community radio stations for anti-monarchy material. Online posters and editors skirt the limits of lese majeste by using euphemisms to refer to members of royal family. Note: This cable is the second in a series of three looking at lese majeste, or offense to the monarchy, at a time at which increasing attention is being paid to the institution and its future. Ref A examined public reaction to recent controversial moves by the Queen and response by the army and police; septel will provide an update on a number of high profile lese majeste cases.

2. (C) Comment: The recent move by the ICT Ministry to further scrutinize anti-monarchy Internet chatter reflects a government response to perceived more widespread criticism of the royal family, particularly of the Queen (ref A). Operators of websites and other online media are increasingly concerned about measures the RTG might take against them and are self-censoring site content to pre-empt future lese majeste charges. As a result, critics of the monarchy are finding less open space to voice their opinions, even anonymously -- precisely what defenders of the monarchy intend through more aggressive implementation of lese majeste. End Summary and Comment.

Ministries on the Alert for Lese Majeste...

3. (SBU) Ministry of Interior Permanent Secretary Phiraphon Traithotsawit on October 26 directed all provincial governors to monitor community radios and leaflets. Phiraphon urged governors to prevent any negative action against the monarchy. ICT Minister Mun Patanotai told the press on October 28 that he was considering spending between \$2.9 million and \$14.6 million to build a "gateway" to monitor and block anti-monarchy websites. In a press statement, Mun refused to reveal the offensive sites, explaining that doing so would encourage visitors to the sites.

...Ask websites to Self-Censor...

4. (C) The ICT Ministry, the Communications Authority of Thailand (CAT), and the Royal Thai Police (RTP) assembled website managers of SameSky.com, Prachathai.com, Pantip.com, Serithai.com, Chuphong.com, and nine other sites on October 30 to request their cooperation in monitoring website content critical of the monarchy. A SameSky.com representative said authorities asked website owners to be "cautious and watchful" about content posted to their sites, urging them to use their own judgment to determine whether or not content was appropriate. Ministry officials warned that the RTG would monitor content and would instruct the webmasters to delete inappropriate content; government officials reminded the website owners that the 2007 Computer Crime Act (CCA) permits police to enforce Internet censorship.

5. (C) Reaction of those in attendance was mixed. Prachatai.com Executive Director Chiranuch Premchaiporn told

us on November 7 that a Serithai.com employee had asserted to ICT Ministry staff that website managers may not share the views of people who post to their websites. In addition, an employee of Pantip.com complained that a recent court order to block that website was based entirely on criticism of Manager Media owner Sondhi Limthongkul, leader of the anti-government People's Alliance for Democracy (PAD), and

BANGKOK 00003374 002.2 OF 002

had nothing to do with the royal family. Chiranuch saw a positive side to the meeting, however, noting she now had a contact point at the ICT Ministry, and her cooperation might protect her somewhat from future allegations of lese majeste.

¶6. (C) Same Sky Magazine editor and website manager Thanapol Eawsakul, accused of lese majeste (ref D), attended similar meetings in the past, though not the October 30 session. He told us that during earlier meetings, ICT Ministry officials had required him to pledge: to co-operate with the ICT Ministry; to delete any content offensive to the monarchy; and to delete any content that is critical of any "third party." He did not resent the ICT officials' action because, in his opinion, the RTG, military, and anti-government protestors forced them to hold such meetings. Thanapol's server is based abroad, and he remained confident that his readers would be able to utilize proxy sites to circumvent any future ICT Ministry blocks to the site.

...And has court orders in hand

¶7. (C) An ICT Ministry official announced at the October 30 meeting that a total of 1,500 court orders existed to block websites, and they were awaiting an additional 600 court orders, Chiranuch noted. (Comment: We presume that these totals include orders to block pornographic websites and others that may be banned for reasons other than offense to the monarchy. End Comment.)

Euphemisms Enable Online Critique of Monarchy...

¶8. (C) Articles on the Same Sky website utilized the moniker "XXX" to refer to the King, "Mama Blue" for the Queen, alluding to her rumored ownership of a stolen Saudi blue diamond, and "O" to refer to the Crown Prince, drawing from the Thai word for his official title. Thanapol believed such thinly veiled references kept him on the safe side of a fine line that United Front of Democracy Against Dictatorship (UDD) supporters have crossed in recent public comments. "UDD publicized in speeches, without self-censorship, what has been spoken privately for years," Thanapol added, saying that he would delete any UDD speeches posted to his site.

¶9. (C) Prachatai Executive Director Chiranuch indicated she also relied heavily on shifting euphemisms to retain a modicum of ambiguity/deniability. References to Queen Sirikit "went from 'Queen' to 'Q' to 'Mama Blue' to 'Fat' and now 'Jie' (from the Chinese word for older sister)," she explained.

...But Constant Vigilance Required

¶10. (C) Chiranuch told us that after the 2006 coup d'etat, daily online visitors to Prachatai increased from 1,000 to 10,000, and that the October 7 clash between PAD protestors and Thai police drove an increase from 15,000 to 30,000 visitors. The surge in posted comments, similar to what SameSky experienced (ref A), required significant additional hours of "eye-ball" scans to purge their sites of potentially offensive comments.

¶11. (C) Chiranuch said she edited conservatively just "to be safe" during the current political climate, using direct quotes as much as possible and deleting even remotely

controversial content that had nothing to do with the monarchy. Her request for assistance yielded 50 volunteers who now worked in shifts to monitor the website 24-hours a day; regular readers also alert her to suspicious first time posters who might be provocateurs. ""We shouldn't have to do this,"" she added, calling the current climate ""a violation of freedom of expression.""

JOHN